

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of the claims replaces and supersedes all previous listings.

1-9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) A method of cutting sheet members, comprising the steps of:

- a) stacking a plurality of sheet members having air impermeability;
- b) fixing the sheet members by vacuum suction;
- c) welding the sheet members together vertically to fix upper and lower sheet members with respect to one another, said welding comprising locally heating a region of the sheet members near a predetermined cutting line by frictional heat generated by contact between the sheet members and a knife or a punch of a cutting head, wherein the region is a seam allowance of pattern pieces[[,]] or a region outside the seam allowance, near a cutting line by frictional heat between the sheet members and a knife or a punch of a cutting head, to weld the sheet members together vertically to fix upper and lower sheet members; and

- d) after performing step c, cutting the sheet members along the [[a]] predetermined cutting line, wherein the predetermined cutting line extends along the pattern pieces.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of cutting sheet members according to claim 10, wherein the local heating step includes locally heating along a region slightly outside the cutting line at a plurality of positions for each piece.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of cutting sheet members according to claim 10, wherein the local heating step includes locally heating in the seam allowance inside the cutting line at a plurality of positions for each piece.

13. (Cancelled)